



Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

2023
—
2024



Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario

We are dedicated to being an effective agent of positive change for the people of Ontario. We do this by standing for the rights and well-being of Ontarians, ensuring their voices are heard, grievances are addressed, and public services are delivered with the utmost professionalism and fairness.

Land acknowledgement and commitment to reconciliation

The Ontario Ombudsman's work takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across the province we now call Ontario. The City of Toronto, where our office is located, is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are thankful to be able to live and work on this land, and we acknowledge the many treaties that overlay it.

We believe in the significance of land acknowledgments as a way to recognize, respect and honour this territory, the treaties, the original occupants, their ancestors, and the historic connection they still have with this territory.

As part of our commitment to reconciliation, our focus in the next few years will be on:

1. Demonstrating our Office's dedication to serving the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples recognized under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* in Ontario;
2. Providing educational opportunities for our staff to help them learn more about our shared history and the harms that have been inflicted on Indigenous peoples;
3. Working to establish mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples across the province; and
4. Continuing to integrate recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls into our work.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work on this part of Turtle Island.

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December 2024

Hon. Ted Arnott, Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Province of Ontario
Queen's Park

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Pursuant to section 12.5 of the *French Language Services Act*, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard and I are pleased to submit the Annual Report on the activities of my Office under that Act, so that you may table it before the Legislative Assembly.

This report covers the period from October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024.

I support the recommendations made herein by the Commissioner and, pursuant to s. 12.5 (3) of the Act, a copy of this report will be provided to the Minister of Francophone Affairs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Dubé', written over a light blue circular background.

Paul Dubé
Ombudsman

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COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



November 8, 2024: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard, centre, surrounded by members of our French Language Services Unit and other Ombudsman colleagues, at our office, Toronto.

Five years of contributions to Ontario's vibrant Francophone community

I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario.

May 1, 2024, marked five years to the day since the Ontario Ombudsman was entrusted with monitoring the administration of the *French Language Services Act*. Every year, the public sends us more and more cases. In five years, we've handled nearly 2,000 cases, produced five Annual Reports and two reports on investigations, and issued 41 recommendations, the majority of which were accepted and implemented by the government, or are in the process of being implemented.



Franco-Ontarian Day: Three celebrations

September 25, 2024: (Clockwise from top left) French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard and Université de Hearst rector Aurélie Lacassagne raise the Franco-Ontarian flag on the university campus. Ombudsman Paul Dubé (centre) and Anne Sophie Leduc, Director of the French Language Services Unit (far left), with the French Language Services team at the Franco-Ontarian Day flag-raising at Queen's Park. French Language Services Unit staff and other Ombudsman Ontario colleagues at the flag-raising at Toronto City Hall.

We have tackled major issues for Francophones in Ontario head-on, including health care services in designated hospitals, frontline services, programs at designated post-secondary institutions, and signage on the roads and in public spaces.

I also want to note that as of November 1, 2024, the designation of Sarnia under the *French Language Services Act* came into effect. Sarnia is now the 27th region in the province with such a designation. Francophones now have the right to receive services in French from offices of the provincial government and its third parties that are in Sarnia or serve the region. If issues arise, my Office will be able to help them.

Our work has led to improvements to services offered in French by the Government of Ontario.

Since I became Commissioner in March 2023, I have met with thousands of Francophones and close to 200 Francophone organizations across Ontario. I have visited many municipalities, including Sudbury, Ottawa, Sarnia, Windsor, London, Chatham-Kent, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Moonbeam, Timmins, Penetanguishene, Toronto and Richmond Hill. I wanted to hear your concerns, understand your day-to-day lives, experience the diversity of the Francophone community, and speak with you about how we at the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario can make your lives easier by helping you access provincial government services in French. I have also encouraged you to reach out to our Office and share your concerns with us.

This year, once again, you've heeded our call, as evidenced by the rising number of cases we've handled.

In this report, I have provided an overview of our considerable accomplishments this past year, which build on our successes over the past five years.

The report includes updates on important work we've done to ensure the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)* is respected. For example, we worked on ensuring compliance with the University of Sudbury's designation under the *FLSA*, compliance for daycares designated under the *FLSA*, and improving training for frontline provincial employees and communications in French on government social media. In addition, we followed up on the recommendations stemming from our investigations into cuts to French-language programming at Laurentian University, and a lack of French in government out-of-home advertising.

I also have my eyes on the future.

When travelling around the province, I heard from many people who had no idea that the *FLSA* existed. Even Ontarians who had heard of it told me they didn't know which Government of Ontario services were covered by the *FLSA* or where they could find these services in their communities.

Over the years, we at the Ombudsman's Office have issued recommendations that seek to address this particular issue. In our first Annual Report on French language services, we made eight recommendations to the Government of Ontario for systematically planning the French language service offerings of ministries, agencies and their third-party service providers. The following year, we recommended that ministries evaluate the quality of their French language services. In our third Annual Report, we recommended an update to Ontario Regulation 398/93 so that it accurately reflects the obligations of designated agencies and the services they offer. And in last year's Annual Report, we recommended training for frontline staff on their obligations to actively offer services in French.

In an ideal world, Francophones would be able to easily identify and locate provincial services in French. This is all the more important because French is not an official language in Ontario. Imagine, for example, if the public could use a website or mobile app to pinpoint services covered by the *French Language Services Act*.

This would align with the spirit of the amendments made to the *FLSA* in 2021 to make services in French more accessible. In its news release announcing the modernization of the Act on December 9, 2021, the government stated that the purpose of the amendments was to ensure French language services are readily available according to the principle of "active offer," and shift the onus of finding these services from users to service providers.

My recommendations this year are along similar lines, and seek to address concerns that Franco-Ontarians have raised in their interactions with us. I hope these recommendations will pave the way to a future in which provincial services in French are well known across the province to anyone who wishes to use them, whether you are a longtime Ontario resident or a newcomer, and whether or not French is your first language.

Happy reading!



Carl Bouchard
French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario

MEETING WITH AND LISTENING TO THE FRANCO-ONTARIAN COMMUNITY



- 1.** August 27, 2024: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard with Réseau-femmes du Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario executive director Danielle Péladeau and team, Windsor. **2.** August 28, 2024: The Commissioner with Centre communautaire francophone Windsor-Essex-Kent executive director Yasmine Joheir, her team and community partners, Windsor. **3.** August 26, 2024: The Commissioner with Centre communautaire francophone president Tanya Tamilio and team, Sarnia. **4.** August 28, 2024: The Commissioner with Carrefour communautaire francophone de London executive director Paulette Desjardins and team, London, Ont. **5.** August 27, 2024: The Commissioner with Centre communautaire de Chatham-Kent La Girouette president Bernard Tremblay and secretary-treasurer Marthe Dumont, Chatham. **6.** September 21, 2024: The Commissioner marks the 50th anniversary of the Clé de la Baie Centre d'activités françaises with executive director Tina-Anne Thibideau, Penetanguishene. **7.** October 17, 2024: The Commissioner speaks to the annual conference of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Ottawa.



8. March 14, 2024: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard poses with executives of the Vanier community services centre, Ottawa. **9.** March 14, 2024: The Commissioner at Collège La Cité with then-president Lise Bourgeois, Ottawa. **10.** March 14, 2024: The Commissioner at the premiere of the film, *Le dernier Canadien français*, with co-creator and producer Isabelle Corriveau, co-creator and director Pascal Justin Boyer, and co-producer Jill Faive, and staff from the University of Ottawa's Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, Ottawa. **11.** March 15, 2024: The Commissioner with senior leaders at Hôpital Montfort, Ottawa. **12.** The Commissioner and Emmanuelle Bleytou, Communications Manager, French Language Services Unit, with Muséoparc Vanier executive director Madeleine Meilleur and curator Yanick Labossière, Ottawa. **13.** October 13, 2024: The Commissioner moderates a panel discussion of Francophone business leaders at the Toronto Global Forum, Toronto.



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14. September 24, 2024: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard with Université de Hearst rector Aurélie Lacassagne, Hearst. **15.** September 25, 2024: The Commissioner speaks to 500 students during Fête Franco, Moonbeam. **16.** September 24, 2024: The Commissioner speaks with Notre-Dame Hospital patient services director Dominic Morin, Hearst. **17.** September 25, 2024: The Commissioner meets with representatives of local Francophone organizations, Kapuskasing. **18.** September 25, 2024: The Commissioner joins Centre culturel La Ronde president and other members of the board of directors at the centre's official opening, Timmins. **19.** May 1, 2024: The Commissioner speaks to a Grade 8 class at École Norval-Morrisseau during a special human rights day, co-organized by the York Region Francophone Association, Richmond Hill. **20.** April 24, 2024: Commissioner Bouchard co-hosts a Club canadien event with Hon. Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Toronto. **21.** March 28, 2024: The Commissioner speaks at a forum on mental health services for Francophones in the Greater Toronto Area, organized by Entité 3, Toronto.

OUR WORK AND METHODS

About the Office of the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is an independent, non-partisan Officer of the Ontario Legislature, appointed by all parties, whose role is to ensure that the provincial government and public sector serve people in a way that is fair, accountable, transparent and respectful of their rights.

The Office of the Ontario Ombudsman was established in 1975 and takes complaints about the administrative decisions and actions of more than 1,000 public sector and government bodies in Ontario.

The Ombudsman's jurisdiction includes provincial government ministries, agencies, corporations, boards, commissions and tribunals, as well as municipalities, universities and school boards. As of May 1, 2019, the Ombudsman's jurisdiction was extended to child protection services and French language services.

We intervene to resolve or investigate issues involving government and public sector administration and make evidence-based recommendations for corrective action when necessary. We do so based on complaints or on our own initiative, and are recognized internationally for the calibre and impact of our work. The Ombudsman's recommendations have been overwhelmingly accepted by the government, resulting in numerous reforms.

We provide free assistance to people who need help accessing public services or having their rights respected. Notable exclusions to our jurisdiction are the decisions of judges and the functions of any court, the conduct of elected officials (including the Premier and Cabinet), as well as hospitals and long-term care homes. However, we can take complaints about French language services provided by certain hospitals, long-term care homes and other bodies specified in the regulations to the *French Language Services Act*.

The Ombudsman publishes reports with recommendations when he conducts individual and systemic investigations. He also publishes an Annual Report, which includes complaint statistics and highlights of the work of all areas of our Office – including the French Language Services Unit.

Between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, the Office of the Ombudsman received **27,030** cases (complaints and inquiries).

Role of the French Language Services Commissioner

Ontario's *French Language Services Act* was passed in 1986 and has been in effect since 1989. It ensures the right to obtain provincial government services in French at head or central offices of government agencies, as well as their offices in or serving designated areas throughout the province.

The French Language Services Commissioner plays an important role in ensuring compliance with these obligations. Reporting to the Ombudsman, the Commissioner is responsible for monitoring compliance with the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)* and recommending ways to improve the delivery of government services in French.

Under the *French Language Services Act*, the Commissioner can review complaints about the offer of services in French by or on behalf of government agencies and institutions of the Legislature. These include ministries, boards, commissions and corporations that have a majority of members or directors appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in council, as well as agencies designated in Ontario Regulation 398/93.

The Commissioner leads the French Language Services Unit, a team of Early Resolution Officers and Investigators that is supported by the Ombudsman's Legal Services, Communications, Finance, Information Technology, and People and Culture teams. The Commissioner and the Director of the French Language Services Unit are members of the Ombudsman's Executive Management Team.

The Commissioner and our French Language Services Unit actively promote French language rights in Ontario, engage in outreach, review and analyze complaints and trends, conduct investigations related to compliance with the Act, prepare reports which include recommendations, and monitor implementation of these recommendations. The benefits of this work, done in collaboration and with the support of our entire Office, are tangible and significant.

As part of our Office, the Commissioner is completely independent of government, political parties, individual complainants and interest groups. The Commissioner has the power to investigate on his own initiative – that is, without a complaint – and to make recommendations to improve the delivery of French language services. These recommendations are based on evidence gathered through the assessment of complaints and interaction with individuals, government agencies and officials, as well as an analysis of relevant legislation.

The importance of cases

As an independent and impartial institution, we have a special relationship with the people of Ontario. The complaints we receive allow us to hear directly from those who feel their rights are not being respected or who believe they are being treated unfairly by the government. By listening to complainants and making inquiries with government agencies, we have a unique perspective that allows us to assess whether services are well-matched to needs, and to make recommendations to remedy service gaps where necessary.

We welcome complaints from people who feel their rights have been ignored. We seek to fully understand each case, identify the facts, and measure the impact of the lack of French language services on people's lives. We are here to help: Our teams also use our authority under the *Ombudsman Act* if a case raises questions of fairness that fall outside of the *French Language Services Act*.

Proactive work

By virtue of our ongoing interactions with key stakeholders, our one-on-one conversations with members of the Franco-Ontarian community, and our engagement with government and various agencies and organizations, we can often resolve issues long before they lead to complaints. We also build productive and appropriate relationships with the government, its agencies, third parties, Ontario's Francophone community and all those who have an interest in French language services across the province.

The Commissioner also meets regularly with counterparts across the country and around the world, such as the members of the International Association of Language Commissioners (IALC) and the international Francophone ombudsman association, l'Association des Ombudsmans et des Médiateurs de la Francophonie (AOMF).



June 12, 2024: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard with fellow members of the International Association of Language Commissioners at their 8th conference, Cardiff, Wales.

Communications and outreach

The goal of our outreach efforts is to raise awareness of our work with as many Francophones as possible across the province, including newcomers, to let them know what their language rights are in Ontario and the role we play in protecting those rights. We encourage more people to contact us with their concerns, so we can resolve issues – both individual and widespread – involving access to provincial government services in French.

Regular contact with Francophones

Between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024, the Commissioner continued to prioritize maintaining close ties with French speakers throughout Ontario and the organizations representing them in all sectors. He held **65** virtual and in-person meetings with Francophone interest groups.

These meetings covered a wide range of topics, including all levels of education, health care (including services for seniors, newcomers and related to mental health), business development, access to justice, services for retired people, newcomer integration, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and services for women who are victims of violence. The Commissioner places a priority on pursuing these issues, both on our own initiative and in response to group requests.

Since taking office in March 2023, Commissioner Bouchard has also written **28** letters to Francophone public figures, highlighting their support for the Franco-Ontarians, e.g., in recognition of a new appointment or an award for work on behalf of the community.

Visiting communities across Ontario

This year, Commissioner Bouchard embarked on new regional tours, beginning with Ottawa in March 2024, coinciding with Francophonie Month. He met with several leaders and teams from the Vanier and Centretown community services centres, Collège La Cité, Montfort Hospital, Vanier Museopark and the University of Ottawa.

In late August, the Commissioner went to Southwestern Ontario, where he met with many representatives at the Centre communautaire de Chatham-Kent La Girouette, the Centre communautaire francophone Sarnia-Lambton, the Centre communautaire francophone Windsor-Essex-Kent, the Carrefour communautaire francophone de London, and the Réseau-Femmes du Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario to discuss local issues.

In September, the Commissioner visited Northeastern Ontario to celebrate Franco-Ontarian Day. On September 25, he attended a ceremony to raise the Franco-Ontarian flag at the Université de Hearst and a celebration in Moonbeam that brought together more than 500 students. He also went to the Notre-Dame Hospital in Hearst, and met with members of the Centre de santé communautaire de Kapuskasing et région, the Centre de Loisirs, the Northeastern Ontario Settlement Services and the Réseau du Nord office in Kapuskasing. In Timmins, he met with leaders from the Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières and Parents partenaires en éducation, and attended the grand opening of the new Centre culturel La Ronde.

Other activities

Aside from this outreach work, we have continued to attend public Francophone events, for a total of **23** this year. The Commissioner regularly met provincial government officials and with his Canadian and international counterparts, for a total of **30** meetings.



(Top photo) **September 25, 2024:** French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard makes a speech at the official opening of Centre culturel La Ronde, Timmins. (Bottom photo) **May 31, 2024:** Commissioner Bouchard delivers a virtual address by video to the annual conference of the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario, held in Canmore, Alta.

Our work has also attracted media attention. The Commissioner responded to **12** written media requests and gave **21** interviews to the media between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024, including at Queen's Park, in TV and radio studios, at events and by phone.

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS

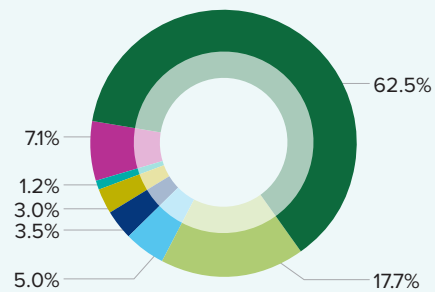
Complaints and inquiries received, October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024

395
cases



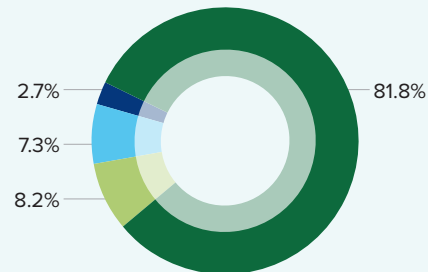
Top case topics

- IN-PERSON SERVICES
- WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS
- ONLINE SERVICES
- SIGNAGE
- TELEPHONE SERVICES
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- OTHER



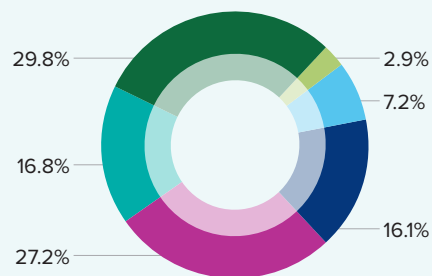
Disposition of closed cases

- ORGANIZATIONS SUBJECT TO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES ACT (FLSA)*
- FEDERAL, PRIVATE, OUTSIDE ONTARIO
- PROVINCIAL PUBLIC SECTOR NOT SUBJECT TO THE FLSA**
- INFORMATION SUBMISSIONS



Disposition of cases closed under the French Language Services Act (FLSA)

- RESOLVED WITH OUR OFFICE'S INTERVENTION
- INQUIRIES MADE OR REFERRAL GIVEN
- CLOSED AFTER OUR OFFICE'S REVIEW
- WITHDRAWN BY COMPLAINANT
- UNABLE TO CONTACT COMPLAINANT
- RESOLVED WITHOUT OUR OFFICE'S INTERVENTION



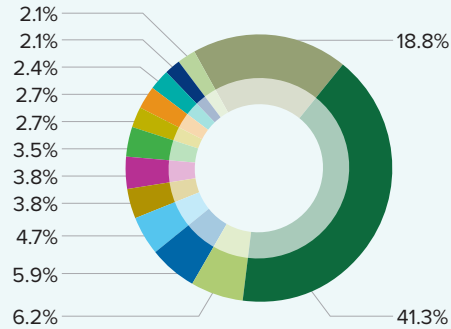
*Complaints and inquiries regarding ministries, boards, commissions, corporations and agencies designated under the French Language Services Act (FLSA).

**E.g., municipalities, school boards and agencies not designated under the FLSA.

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Top organizations (subject to the *FLSA*) by case volume

- DESIGNATED AGENCIES – CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
- MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
- MINISTRY OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROCUREMENT
- MINISTRY OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL
- METROLINX
- MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION
- ONTARIO HEALTH
- MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
- TRIBUNALS ONTARIO
- MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
- DESIGNATED AGENCIES – HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE
- OTHER*



*See the Appendix of this report for a breakdown of these cases.

Communications and outreach

23
Events attended

65

Meetings and discussions with Franco-Ontarian interest groups and community organizations

30

Meetings and discussions with cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, other ombudsmen, officers of the Legislative Assembly, and other Canadian and international counterparts

21

Media interviews

12

Videos, statements from the Commissioner and signed social media messages

Summary

The French Language Services Unit received a total of **395** cases (complaints and inquiries) between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024, up 2.3% from the year before.

The most common complaint topics were in-person services (accounting for 62.5% of all cases about organizations subject to the *French Language Services Act*) and written communications (17.7%).

The three sectors that were the subject of the most complaints were:

- Designated agencies (under Ontario Regulation 398/93) offering child, community and family services (**41.3%**)
- The Ministry of the Attorney General (**6.2%**)
- The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement (**5.9%**)

More than **100** of the cases related to designated child, community and family services agencies were about a treatment services centre for mental health, addiction and other issues in Eastern Ontario whose services were affected for several months by a work stoppage. We contacted the centre, which is designated in Ontario Regulation 398/93 (under the *French Language Services Act*), to better understand the situation and its impact on public services. Senior management told us that the centre had continued to offer certain services, including services to the populations most at-risk. The centre had also provided a list of other resources offering services in French for Francophones in need of help.

Our analysis of case trends this year determined that the delivery of French language services fell short in several areas, including the cultural and tourism sectors, the administration of justice in French, transportation services, and online resources. There

“ I greatly appreciate the good work you do. A great and efficient team that provides help to the entire Franco-Ontarian community. I know we can always count on you.” [Translation] ”

- Comment from a complainant

were also many cases where insufficient service in French exacerbated difficult situations for individuals.

Throughout this report, we have highlighted cases that we resolved – many of which have led to improvements that will prevent future complaints.

Note: To protect complainant confidentiality, the cases in this report have been anonymized. Identifying details, including gender, may have been removed or changed.

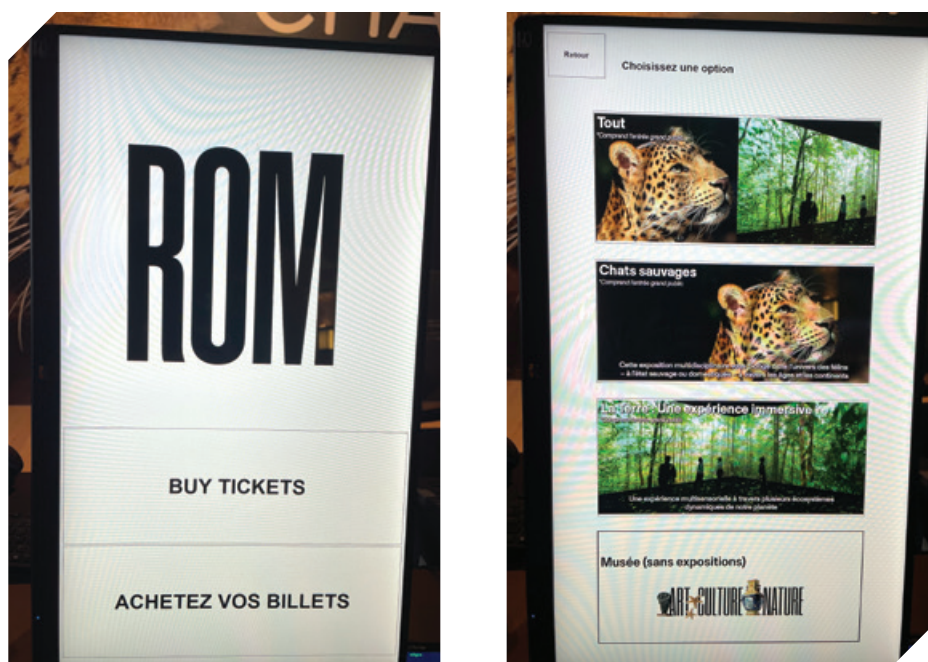
Trends in cases: Tourism and cultural sectors

Over the past year, many Francophones contacted us about the quality or lack of services in French offered by government agencies in the tourism and cultural sectors. For example, they described issues that came up during family outings or challenges they had when planning an educational or leisure activity. They were expecting their experience of certain tourist attractions to be equivalent to what Anglophones experience, but that is not what happened. The organizations in question are defined as government agencies under the *French Language Services Act*, so they are under the same obligations to offer services in French as ministries are. Here are some examples of complaints of this nature that we handled up to September 30, 2024.

A disappointing entrance

When visiting the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto with his family, a Francophone noticed that the touchscreen ticket vending machines at the entrance were only available in English. He subsequently contacted us to make a complaint.

The Royal Ontario Museum is an agency of the Government of Ontario. The museum told us that the ticket machines had been installed just a few weeks before the man's visit, and at that time they were operating in English only. However, they said bilingual staff were still available at the ticket counter to serve Francophones in person. They said the initial plan was to have the machines available in both English and French from the outset, but translating, testing and implementing the French version had



Touchscreen ticket kiosks at the entrance to the Royal Ontario Museum.

taken longer than planned. The museum decided to move forward with unilingual English machines in anticipation of the busy holiday season.

RESULT

Two months after the complainant’s visit, a French language option had been implemented on the machines. The museum confirmed to us that in the future, all visitor-facing technology would be tested in English and French for simultaneous rollout in both languages. They acknowledged that “it should have been done in this case.”

Unscientific translations

A Francophone father contacted us after visiting the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto with his family in the summer of 2023. He told us that there were five staff members at the admissions counter, but none of them could

speak any French beyond “bonjour.” He asked, in English, if he could be served in his language of choice. He was told that there was one bilingual employee, but it was unclear where that person was. Disappointed, he completed his transaction in English. Later, he also noticed that not all of the public announcements made over the Science Centre’s public address system were bilingual. For example, a message at 4:15 p.m. that announced the museum would close at 5 p.m. was in English only; the only bilingual announcement of the closing time came at 4:55 p.m. The man also noticed that the announcements asking visitors to take the parking lot shuttles were in English only.

RESULT

We raised this visitor’s concerns with the Science Centre. The Science Centre told us that they were looking for additional bilingual staff to meet their *French Language Services Act* obligations and promised to review the recordings of all their recorded public announcements. Before it closed on June 21, 2024, the Science Centre confirmed to us that it had begun issuing all of its announcements in English and in French.

An historic moment

During a visit, an Ottawa Francophone noticed that the name of the Upper Canada Village tourist site in Eastern Ontario was in English only. This attraction is managed by the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, a government agency.

RESULT

While this complaint was being reviewed, the unilingual “Upper Canada Village” sign at the entrance suffered heavy damage due to a storm. As a result of our intervention, the Commission took advantage of the situation and replaced the sign, which is now bilingual and reads “Upper Canada Village du Haut Canada.”

The man told us that he would visit Upper Canada Village again to see the new sign. **“You’re doing great work, you’re persistent and you’re**



Sign at the entrance to Upper Canada Village – the bilingual version (right) was added after our intervention.

serious about the active offer of services in French. Thank you.”
 [Translation]

Active offer at the Legislative Assembly

During a visit to the Legislative Assembly, we noticed that the security staff were welcoming visitors in English only, and the ID cards they gave to visitors were also in English only. However, Measure 1 of Ontario Regulation 544/22 regarding the “active offer” of services in French stipulates that “[i]f a person seeking services from an agency or institution, whether it be in person, over the phone or virtually through electronic means, is greeted in English, the person shall also be greeted in French.”

RESULT

We reached out to the Legislative Assembly, which drafted a memo to all security staff describing a detailed procedure for welcoming visitors in both languages. Training was also provided. For the badges, a new system was set up to print bilingual content. The Legislative Assembly took the opportunity



Bilingual version of visitor identification badge, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, issued after our intervention.

afforded by this change to add a dozen additional translations and translate other badges for subcontracting, delivery and school visits.

Heritage plaques: See other side

We noticed that the same text – in English only – appeared on both sides of the provincial plaque at Old City Hall in downtown Toronto. The Provincial Plaque Program, which commemorates important historical people, places, events, sites and works, is administered by the Ontario Heritage Trust, an agency of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, the plaque at Old City Hall was replaced with a version that has English on one side and French on the other. The Trust has begun replacing 900 unilingual plaques throughout the province with bilingual ones, following an order of priority established by the Trust. They told us the content for all plaques has been translated, and the French versions can also be found in the Trust's online plaque database.



Provincial plaque at Old City Hall in Toronto, administered by the Ontario Heritage Trust. The bilingual version (right) was added after our intervention.



The next two cases focus on the social media accounts of government agencies. It is worth noting that the Commissioner’s first recommendation in our 2022-2023 Annual Report asked the Ministry of Francophone Affairs to develop and communicate guidelines to ensure all social media accounts comply with the “active offer” regulation. The Ministry of Francophone Affairs, Cabinet Office and Treasury Board are working together to implement this recommendation.

Making room for French

A Franco-Torontonian looking for a family activity in his neighbourhood was interested in the exhibition called “Lumière: The Art of Light” at Ontario Place. He contacted us after noticing that Ontario Place’s four social media accounts (X, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) were in English only.

RESULT

We brought this concern to the Ontario Place Corporation. As a result of our intervention, Ontario Place developed French language content. The content of all four social media accounts is now bilingual.

New exhibits – on social media

In fall 2023, a Francophone contacted us to report the lack of French in the social media posts of an Ontario museum. He noted that the headings and content of some posts on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook were in English only.

RESULT

We brought this concern to the museum, an agency of the Government of Ontario. As a result, the museum developed an action plan to resolve the complaint. In spring 2024, it launched new French language accounts on X and Facebook, as well as on Instagram (which the complainant had not mentioned) and started posting equivalent content in both French and English.

A museum representative told us: **“We appreciate the professionalism and support that your office has shown throughout this process.”**

Trends in cases: Justice in French

Francophones needing to use the Ontario justice system regularly face challenges in accessing service in French. The lack of such services has significant repercussions on Francophones in vulnerable situations. Between October 2023 and September 2024, nearly 1 in 10 cases received by the French Language Services Unit were about the justice sector.

While we do not have jurisdiction over judges or courts, we can review how Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General administers the courts. The Francophones who contacted us raised issues that included translation and interpretation services and French language communications. Some examples of justice-related cases we handled in the past year are included below.

Last September, Tribunals Ontario provided an update to the Commissioner on their efforts and progress with regard to the provision of services in French. They indicated, among other things, that they have made it a priority to offer services in French of equal quality to those offered in English. They also highlighted their efforts in training and recruiting bilingual adjudicators, many of whom handle cases for more than one tribunal. Tribunals Ontario said their current complement of bilingual adjudicators allows them to handle cases in French in a timely manner (747 cases in fiscal 2023-2024).

Cracking the code

To prepare for a virtual hearing where he was representing himself without the help of legal counsel, a Francophone man tried to access a secure portal on the Ministry of the Attorney General's website. He complained to us that the website was available in English only.



We brought this concern to the Ministry of the Attorney General. We learned that the French login page could be accessed only if French was the default

language in the user’s browser settings. If the user accessed the portal with a browser whose default language was English, the login page appeared automatically in English. As a result of our intervention, the Ministry’s IT department created a new landing page for the Criminal Digital Disclosure Hub Platform that allows users to choose their preferred language before accessing the login page.

Bilingualism not on their radar

A Francophone received an automated speed enforcement camera ticket in the mail from their municipality. The document was bilingual and directed the reader to the municipality’s website to pay the ticket. However, the website was entirely in English.

RESULT

The municipality, like others across Ontario, administers most cases related to provincial offences on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General. As a result, the municipality is considered to be a third party according to Ontario Regulation 284/11 under the *French Language Services Act*, which requires government agencies to ensure that French language services are still provided when contracted to a third party. As a result of our intervention in this case, the municipality confirmed that their provincial offences website, including the portion of the site for payment of automated speeding tickets, will be available in both languages. Work on the website began in fall 2024 and the municipality expects it to be completed by the end of the year. We will continue to closely monitor this project.

The real cost of a “free” translation tool

A Francophone from British Columbia received a ticket from an Ontario municipality requiring him to pay thousands of dollars in fines. Although the notice was bilingual, the website of the Provincial Offences Court was in English only. The Francophone also tried to get telephone service in French from the municipality, but the automated system did not provide a French option, and none of the available staff were bilingual.

The logo consists of a stylized 'R' shape formed by two overlapping semi-circles, one pink and one light blue, followed by the word 'RESULT' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

We reached out to the Ministry of the Attorney General about this case. The municipality acts as a third party for the administration of provincial offences. As a result of our intervention, some measures were taken and others are under way. A bilingual administrative clerk of the court has since been hired. The Ministry told us the municipality’s telephone system is now compliant with Measure 2 of Ontario Regulation 544/22, which stipulates that “[a]ny automated telephone systems shall provide persons, at the start of the call, the option of receiving services via telephone in English or French.”

As for the website, the municipality had initially decided to use a free online translation service. Our Office contacted the Ministry to raise concerns about the site’s terms of use, which stated that “you [the website user] agree that when a translation is provided, you assume any risk of inaccuracy, errors or omissions it may include. You agree NOT to hold the City of [...] responsible for any loss or damage resulting from your trust in or use of this tool.”

In light of our intervention, the Ministry informed the municipality that the use of an automated translation tool does not meet the government’s expectations under the obligations of the *French Language Services Act*. A full translation of the website is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024. We will follow up on this case as warranted.

Tailor-made forms

The Child and Family Services Review Board conducts reviews and hearings on a number of matters that affect children, youth and families in Ontario. The Board is one of 13 tribunals that make up Tribunals Ontario. It sent a mediation report in English to a Francophone mother, despite the fact that she had asked to receive the report in French. When her case was first opened, the form allowed her to request accommodation measures, but did not clearly specify the offer of service in French. This led her to believe that service was not available in French. Her case was closed on the pretext that she had rejected the report, when in reality, she had not fully understood the English. She then turned to us.



RESULT

As a result of our intervention, the Board updated its forms, specifying at the top of the first page that it offers services in French and giving users the ability to choose their preferred language from the outset. A total of 14 Board forms were changed. The woman subsequently opened a second case in French and informed us that she is now receiving all services in French, both written and oral.

Trends in cases: Transportation

A significant portion of Ontarians drive or use public transit daily. Much of the travel information provided to the public is covered by the *French Language Services Act*. This information must be offered actively, reliably and clearly.

The transportation sector generates its fair share of complaints about French language services. We reported on a variety of issues in our previous Annual Reports, including unilingual signage on provincial roadways, English-only announcements on Metrolinx GO trains, incomprehensible traveller information provided through 511, the lack of French accents on driver's licences and the translation of a form letter accompanying drivers' medical records. This year, services provided by the Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx continued to generate complaints to our Office. Here are a few examples.

No test, no job

After completing truck driver training in Ottawa, a Francophone tried multiple times to get a certified bilingual driver examiner for his test at a DriveTest centre in southern Ottawa, a designated area under the *French Language Services Act*. He complained to us that despite confirming the appointment, the centre told him each time that the bilingual examiner was unavailable. He told us that he had been hired for a job on the condition that he would pass his test, and the delay in getting his licence might make him lose the opportunity. He described

the situation to us in these words: “If I can’t pass this test, I can’t earn a living.” [Translation]

RESULT

We brought this case to the Ministry of Transportation, which contracts a private company to provide drivers’ tests at a variety of centres across the province on behalf of the government. The Ministry told us the only bilingual examiner certified for trucks had been unavailable for personal reasons on the occasions the man had arranged to take his test. The Ministry assured us that the man would be able to take his practical exam 10 days later with a bilingual examiner from another DriveTest centre. The Ministry also told us about its plans to train new examiners for the Ottawa centre. We continued following up on recruitment and training, and confirmed that the DriveTest centre that was the subject of the complaint now has three certified bilingual driver examiners for heavy vehicles.

Shortly thereafter, the complainant left us the following message: **“I got my licence today. I wanted to thank you very much for your help and for everything you did for me. Thank you!”** [Translation]

Settling the bills

In the Commissioner’s 2022-2023 Annual Report, we mentioned a Francophone who had received a bill from the Ministry of Transportation’s Highway Incident Claims Unit following a car crash in the Ottawa area. She did not receive services in French when she contacted the Ministry of Transportation. As a result of our intervention, the Unit improved its provision of services in French. However, as we analyzed this case, we noticed that the bill was in English only. Although the complainant had not raised this issue, we nevertheless addressed it with the Ministry.

RESULT

The Ministry of Transportation made changes to its management system. All bills issued by the Highway Incident Claims Unit are now bilingual.



Bilingual messages on GO Transit buses after our intervention.

The screens on the bus say “we speak French”

GO Transit, the public transit service for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, is a division of government agency Metrolinx. A Francophone reported to us that the Black History Month messages displayed on the electronic destination signage of GO Transit buses were in English only (as were many similar messages throughout the year).

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, Metrolinx updated all public relations messages in its database to include bilingual versions to be used in GO Transit buses’ electronic signage.

The complainant told us: **“I’ve already started seeing some bilingual messages on GO buses. I always appreciate your office’s help. You’re so great!”** [Translation]

The future is bilingual

The future Ontario line will be a 15.6-kilometre subway line in Toronto. A Franco-Torontonian who wanted to know how work on the line was coming along complained to us that the social media content on X (@OntarioLine) for this Metrolinx project was in English only. He told us

he felt it was important for Metrolinx, a government agency, “to post information in French too.”

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, Metrolinx updated the @OntarioLine account bio on X to be bilingual, and it now posts content in both languages. In addition, at the time this complaint was resolved, Metrolinx told us that it was planning to open an X account exclusively for French language content by the end of 2024.

One fare, two languages

While riding the Viva Blue bus line, operated by York Region Transit (YRT) between Newmarket and Toronto, a Francophone woman noticed that a Metrolinx brochure available in the bus was in English only. The brochure offered information about the new One Fare Program.

RESULT

We contacted Metrolinx, which told us that a French version of the brochure existed but had not been distributed. Shortly thereafter, Metrolinx replaced the unilingual version of the brochure with a bilingual one. Metrolinx told us it would henceforth print bilingual versions of all its marketing materials, including postcards and brochures.

Dropped call

Ontario Northland, a government agency, is responsible for providing transportation services in Northern Ontario. A Francophone who wanted information from Ontario Northland called the agency’s toll-free line to book bus tickets, and felt frustrated by the experience. Even though the Francophone chose the French option, the system put them on hold with information messages in English.

Once the call was connected, the Francophone asked to be served in French, and the call dropped. The Francophone tried again, choosing the French option, and the call was either dropped or no one answered after

several minutes on hold. Only once they chose the English option were they able to get the information they wanted.

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, Ontario Northland began the process to hire three full-time bilingual employees and one substitute bilingual employee to make sure the call centre was operational 24/7. Ontario Northland is also working on updating its system so the caller's chosen language is recorded as soon as the call is received, meaning that "hold" messages will be in French when the caller has chosen French. Call centre staff were also reminded to practice the "active offer" of service in French.

Trends in cases: Difficult personal situations

Our French Language Services Unit staff often speak with Francophones who are dealing with challenging or precarious life circumstances. Feeling distraught, disheartened, exasperated or simply frustrated, the individuals who contacted us have shared the sometimes emotional stories of their struggles to either understand a response given by a government agency in English or to make themselves understood in French. Here are a few examples.

Ensuring bilingual service

A Francophone man told us about a workplace accident that left him unable to use his legs for a few years. After multiple complex surgeries, he started walking again. His injury claim was submitted to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). He shared a letter with us from the WSIB that was written in English and sent via the unilingual Anglophone nursing consultant assigned to his case, even though the man had stated that French was his preferred language. He asked for a translation of the letter but did not receive one.

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, the WSIB provided the man with a French version of the letter. The WSIB told us that confirming a claimant's preferred

language is part of its procedures for assigning cases, including through nursing consultants. The WSIB sent out a newsletter to remind its staff to take each claimant's preferred language into account and assign cases involving Francophones to French-speaking staff. Lastly, the WSIB told us it would have internal discussions about its information system so that a claimant's preferred language can be more easily identified when their file is opened.

Bad experience, better service

A Francophone woman contacted us to share an experience she found particularly distressing. She had visited a ServiceOntario location near her home in the greater Toronto area to renew her Photo Card. While in line, she asked for service in French from the receptionist, who responded in English.

The woman told us she felt ignored. She said she subsequently went up to the receptionist several times to ask, in English, to be served in French. She said she was uncomfortable during these interactions and told us she was also subjected to negative comments from other clients at the ServiceOntario location. She finally received service in what she described as "very rough" French, and she reported the incident to the location manager.

RESULT

We raised this matter with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement. Although this ServiceOntario location is managed by a private service provider and is not in an area that is designated under the *French Language Services Act*, it is located at an intersection that borders two designated areas.

The *FLSA* gives people the right to receive service in French from government offices and agencies and third parties that are located in or serve a designated area.

While we were analyzing this case, the Ministry informed us that the service provider had hired a full-time bilingual employee for this location.

The service provider also accepted the Ministry's request to install signs stating that service in French is available and to greet clients in both English and French as stipulated in the "active offer" regulation. Lastly, the ServiceOntario web page for this location was updated to make it explicit that service is available there in French.

No time to lose

Two Francophone students who were new to Ontario contacted us to report that the financial aid staff at an English-language college who administer the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) were unable to process their applications, as none of them could review the documents the students had submitted in French.

The college asked the students to either have the documents translated into English at their own expense or permit them to be sent to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for review, with an estimated processing time of eight to 10 weeks. This could have potentially run past the deadline for the two women to have their student loans approved, which made them anxious. They sought legal assistance. After the students' lawyers intervened, the college accepted the French documents.

RESULT

The Ontario Student Assistance Program is a provincial government service. The college administers OSAP on behalf of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, making it a third party within the meaning of the *French Language Services Act*. The Ministry is required to ensure that the service is provided in French.

As a result of our intervention, the Ministry made an agreement with the college to review French documents on its behalf.

In addition, the Ministry posted a message on the Financial Aid Office Information Portal, setting out the government's expectations for financial aid offices at all colleges and universities to serve students in French, including at colleges and universities that do not have any French language programs. It also outlined the procedure for financial aid offices to follow if they are unable to review a French document provided by a student for OSAP purposes.

This information was included in the 2024-2025 Full-Time OSAP Policy Manual used by those who administer OSAP on the Ministry's behalf. Among the changes made to the manual is this addition: "It is expected that third parties administering OSAP and related programs on the Ministry's behalf are responsible for the provision of services, including providing OSAP-related services in French at English post-secondary institutions. Under no circumstances should a student's request to receive OSAP-related services in French be denied."

We received the following feedback once the case was resolved:

“ I think this is a fantastic resolution to this issue, because tangible changes were made so that incidents like the one cited in our complaint won't happen again. Thank you to the Ombudsman for your work. ” [Translation]

“ I'm glad to hear that the issue was resolved, and I think students will be pleased that they won't have to spend money to have their French documents translated. ” [Translation]

Language support

The Ontario Autism Program, administered by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, offers support to families of children and youth on the autism spectrum.

A Francophone parent of a child with autism complained to us that the program communicated with them in English, both orally and in writing, even though the parent identified French as their preferred language.

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, the Francophone parent's language preference was correctly recorded in their file with the Ontario Autism Program. In addition, a bilingual care co-ordinator was assigned to the family, and all letters sent to the Francophone parent are now either in French or bilingual.

Daycare designations – Not child’s play

In February 2024, we learned via the news media of possible changes happening at Le Petit Chaperon Rouge, a Francophone daycare centre in Toronto that appears in Ontario Regulation 398/93 as a government agency designated under the *French Language Services Act*. One of the centre’s locations was reportedly planning to close its doors.

We took steps to reach out to the agency, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs for more information about the agency’s compliance with the *FLSA*. At the same time, we received complaints about the potential closure of the daycare location.

Many of the complainants were emotional about the prospect, telling us they feared spots for children in Francophone daycare centres (which are often difficult to get) would dry up. They also talked about how important learning French is for children under five in families of mixed linguistic backgrounds, their children’s specific needs, and the announced closure’s impact on them and the community. Some were newcomers to Canada who said the daycare gave them the chance to meet other Francophone parents. They expressed that speaking the same language helped them form friendships that made it easier to integrate into Canadian society.

Two weeks after announcing the closure, the daycare centre reversed its decision.

RESULT

This situation highlighted gaps in knowledge of the application of the *French Language Services Act* among designated child care providers as well as the public. As part of our complaint analysis process, the Commissioner reminded the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs of the requirements of the *FLSA* with respect to compliance for designated agencies.

He stressed that his review of the complaints revealed serious issues with how the ministries manage the designation of daycare centres.

The Commissioner also noted that the list of designated agencies in Ontario Regulation 398/93 is outdated and unclear, and as a result, members of the

public do not have access to reliable information about where they can access services in French, and designated agencies are not aware of their legal obligations—in particular, what services must be provided in French and where.

He encouraged the ministries to take swift action to rectify the situation and ensure that any corrective action taken does not decrease the level of French language service currently available in Ontario.

The French Language Services Unit continues to follow up with the ministries to secure tangible evidence that progress has been made to ensure the compliance of daycare centres that are designated under the *French Language Services Act*.

Trends in cases: Online resources

When people need information quickly, the first place they look is often online. Government agencies have considerably increased the amount of information and breadth of services they make available through their websites.

Right on target

A Francophone who was interested in taking a firearm safety course visited the Firearms Safety Education Service of Ontario (FSESO) website, as the FSESO offers firearm handling courses. The FSESO is the sole service provider for the Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course in the province. He noticed that FSESO's website was only available in English. Since the website stated that the FSESO had a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of the Solicitor General, he questioned whether FSESO's website should be available in French.

RESULT

We brought this concern to the FSESO and the Ministry of the Solicitor General. The Ministry told us that the FSESO provides services as a third party on behalf of the government and agreed that FSESO should comply with the *French Language Services Act*. As a result of our intervention, the FSESO had its website fully translated into French.

The man responded: **“I am very pleased, and you should be proud of the excellent work you’ve done. I appreciate you following up. Thank you.”**
[Translation]

Lost in translation

While watching the livestream of the tabling of the province’s 2024 budget on the Government of Ontario’s French YouTube channel, a Francophone noticed that, when the Minister of Finance spoke in French near the end of the video, the interpreter translated what he said into English. The woman pointed out that this prevented Francophones from hearing the one part of the speech that the Minister delivered in French.

RESULT

As a result of our intervention, Cabinet Office committed to posting French or bilingual livestreams from the Legislative Assembly on the government’s French YouTube channel going forward. Only the parts in English will be translated, so Francophones watching on the French channel will no longer hear an interpreter talking over a member of the Legislative Assembly who is speaking French in the House.

The complainant’s response: **“I’m so happy with how this turned out. Thank you.”** [Translation]

Comprehensive training

An employee of a Francophone non-profit organization in eastern Ontario was responsible for organizing French language training for members of the employer’s joint health and safety committee. Even though this training is mandatory under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, she had difficulty finding an approved training provider on the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development’s website. Discrepancies between the English and French lists made finding information a challenge. She told us she also noticed that only the first of the three required parts of the training program was available in French, whereas they were all available in English. Lastly, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* green book meant to guide the training was not available in French, but the English version was available for order online.

RESULT

We brought these matters to the Ministry. To start, the Ministry helped the woman find an approved provider to give the first two parts of the training

program in French. Our discussions continued with the Ministry after that, and it expanded its list of service providers. All three parts of the training program, including the refresher program, are now available in French, both in person and remotely. The Ministry corrected the discrepancies on its website by reconciling the English and French versions of the list of approved providers. Lastly, the French version of the green book is now available to order online.

Long-term solution

A Francophone reached out to us after taking part in a webinar hosted by a non-profit organization that receives funding from the Ministry of Long-Term Care. She had signed up for the webinar as she is part of the family council for a long-term care home. She received a bilingual email from the Ministry inviting residents, families and caregivers to an information session that would provide important updates from the Ministry on changes to regulations that apply to long-term care homes. However, as we confirmed when we reviewed a recording of it, this webinar was in English only.

Although the webinar was hosted by the non-profit, all the slides presented were from the Ministry, and the speakers were public servants. The question-and-answer period was also in English only. At the end, attendees were told to email the Ministry if they had any further questions. The woman told us she would have liked to have had the presentation given in French, with an opportunity for viewers to ask questions in their preferred language during the webinar.

RESULT

We brought this case to the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Up to this point, the Ministry's approach to informing Francophones was to send the organization a French version of the presented slides after the webinar so the organization could later post them on its website alongside the webinar recording.

As a result of our intervention, the organization pledged to host webinars in French, at which the Ministry would disseminate information via bilingual public servants who are able to give presentations and answer attendees' questions in French. That pledge became concrete when the organization subsequently hosted a webinar on respiratory illness preparedness with the Ministry's involvement.

The woman's response: **“Thank you so much for your help with this. I was so happy to attend a webinar in French for the first time.”** [Translation]

Automated errors

A Francophone with more than a decade of experience with a professional association in the education field contacted us after he noticed some errors on the French version of the association's website. He reported that the terminology was wrong for several professional titles. He also noticed some English words in the French membership registration and renewal forms. He told us he filed a complaint with the association by email, but the automated replies he received were in English only.

RESULT

Although they operate in the public sector, self-regulating professional associations in Ontario are not government agencies under the *French Language Services Act*. Rather than contacting the association, we reached out to the Ministry of Education to discuss the man's concern. Ministry officials contacted the association, which made a number of corrections to its website. The association confirmed that the forms, which are only available to members, were also corrected.

Later, the association told our Office that the automated English replies the man received were likely due to an operational error in their system, which has since been resolved. We let the man know about the result of our intervention, and he was highly appreciative.

Difficulty locating offices where provincial government services are available in French

With the passing of Ontario Regulation 544/22 and its prescribed measures for the active offer of services in French, the Government of Ontario reiterated the responsibility of service providers—the government itself, its agencies or third parties—to offer French services wherever the *French Language Services Act* applies. This should make the available services apparent, recognizable and straightforward to access.

Yet, when we hear from Francophones through the complaints we handle, at the booths and information sessions we run at public events, or during the Commissioner's visits across Ontario, they regularly ask us what services they are entitled to and where these services are available. We also receive requests for information from Francophones who want to know whether a particular service is subject to the *FLSA*.



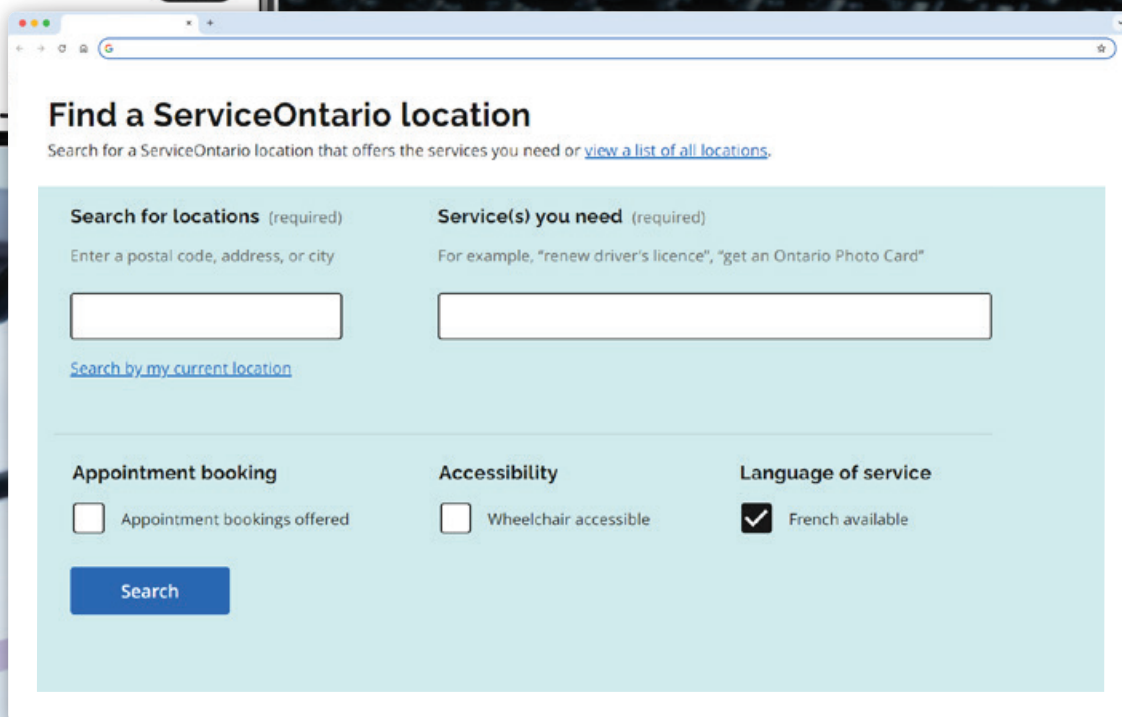
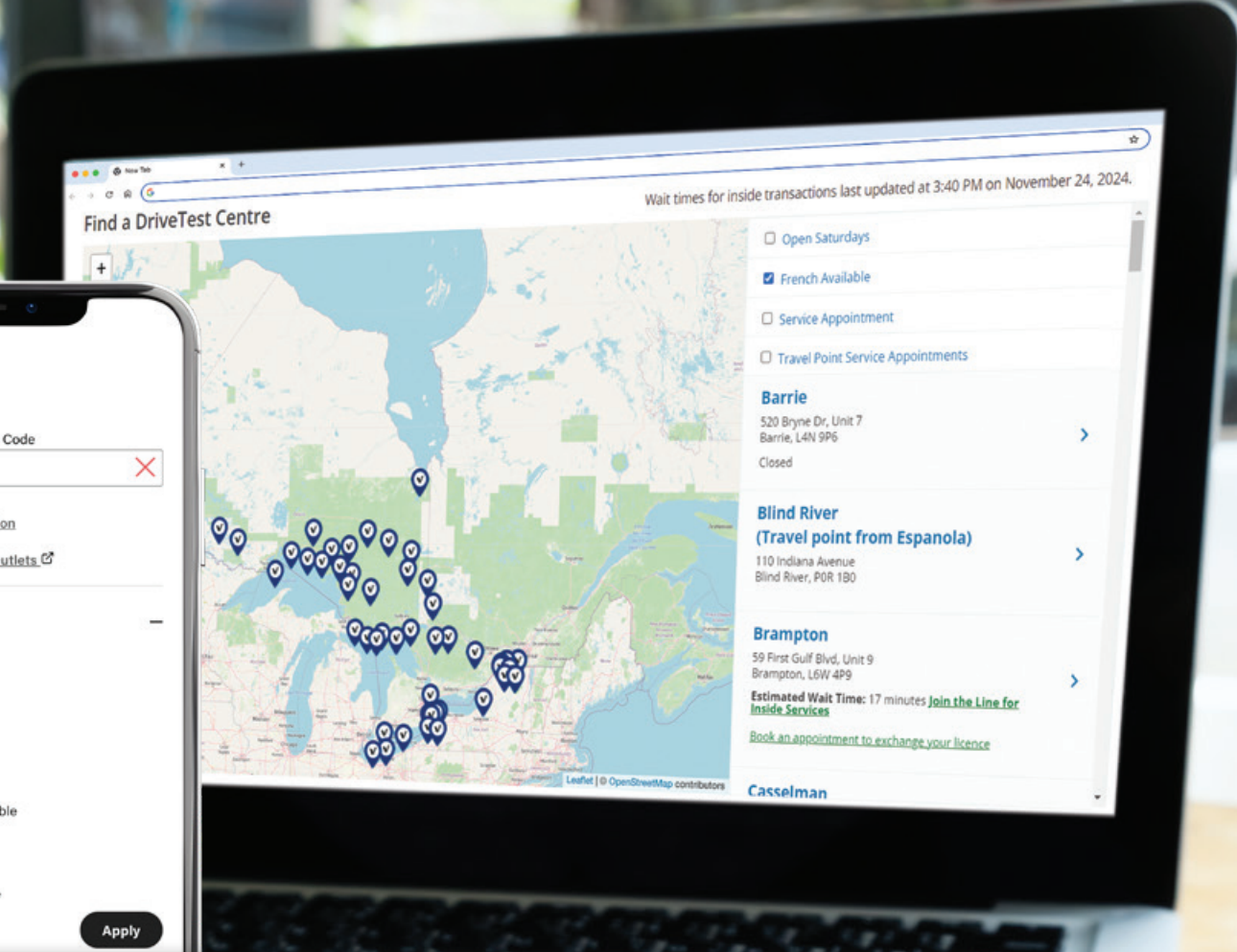
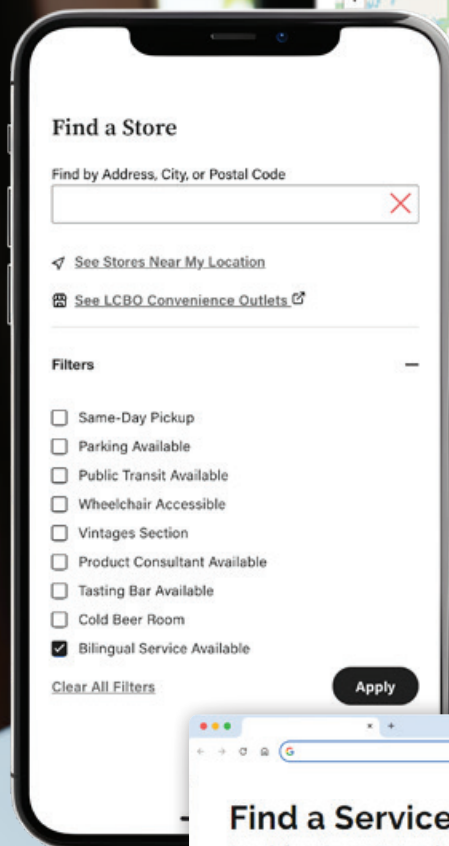
Franco-Ontarian flag on the uniform of an Ontario Provincial Police officer, signifying the officer speaks French. (Source: OPP Facebook account.)

Some government agencies have taken steps to make it easier to ascertain where services are available in French. This includes the Ontario Provincial Police, which now lets French-speaking officers wear a Franco-Ontarian flag pin on their uniforms.

A similar practice is in place for French-speaking staff at Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) stores. The Board told us that, for employees who take a language assessment and are certified bilingual, a pin identifying them as such is considered a mandatory part of their uniform.



Liquor Control Board of Ontario employee wears a green button (left) to let customers know they can serve them in French; signage (right) explaining the buttons to the public. (Source: LCBO)



Examples of websites that can be searched to find branches that offer services in French: LCBO, ServiceOntario and DriveTest.

Some government agencies have also added the option to filter the list of locations on their websites by those that provide services in French. This approach was taken by the LCBO and DriveTest Centres in recent years and by ServiceOntario more recently.

Finally, in October 2024, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs unveiled a visual identifier in the form of a logo that agencies designated under the *FLSA* can print out and use to more clearly identify themselves as providing services in French.

The Commissioner's recommendations

The Commissioner's Message at the beginning of this report emphasizes how important it is for the Ontario government to communicate its offer of services in French in a clear and effective manner.

Over the past five years, within the Office of the Ombudsman, we have issued recommendations aimed at equipping the government to identify and communicate the services it is obliged to offer under the *French Language Services Act*.

Our first Annual Report on French language services in 2020 made eight recommendations, calling on the province to systematically plan the provision of services in French by ministries, their agencies and their third parties. A year later, our next report recommended that ministries evaluate the quality of their services in French. Our third Annual Report recommended updating Ontario Regulation 398/93 to properly outline the obligations of designated agencies and the services they provide. And in our Annual Report last year, we recommended training all frontline employees on their obligations to provide an "active offer" services in French.

The French Language Services Commissioner considers it critical for Ontarians to know where the government must offer services in French, since French is not an official language of the province.

For example, a website or mobile application would allow the general population to clearly identify where provincial government services covered by the *French Language Services Act* are available.

Such an approach would also be in line with the spirit of the amendments made to the *FLSA* in 2021. The government indicated at that time that these changes were made to make services in French more easily accessible, and the onus would be on service providers to ensure an active offer of such services.

Although the government's "Government services in French" web page provides a list and a static map of areas designated under the *FLSA*, it does not provide a list of government agencies or locations where services in French are available. The map also does not show services available from designated agencies (hospitals, children's aid societies, seniors' residences, universities, etc.) that are required to provide some or all of their services in French.

The Ministry of Francophone Affairs is responsible for enforcing the *FLSA*, and is therefore required to collect and maintain information about certain French language services available in Ontario. For example, the Ministry administers Ontario Regulation 398/93, which lists the public service agencies that are designated to provide service in French, including daycare centres, hospitals and universities.

In keeping with Recommendation 2 in our 2021-2022 Annual Report – that the Ministry of Francophone Affairs update Ontario Regulation 398/93 – the Ministry is currently working to update the information in the Regulation and reporting to us on a regular basis.

Whenever a public agency agrees to have a third party provide a service on its behalf, it is required to file a report with the Ministry of Francophone Affairs under Ontario Regulation 284/11.

In addition to the Ministry's responsibilities, the *FLSA* directly makes each minister accountable for reporting to Cabinet on their ministry's implementation of the *FLSA* and the quality of the French language services it provides.

Despite these requirements, our work shows that there is no centralized information source that Francophones can consult to find out where and how they can exercise their linguistic rights. The provincial government has invested considerable time and effort in order to be able to offer French language services and meet its obligations pursuant to the *FLSA*. But rights don't provide much benefit to people who don't know about them. And part of knowing what one's rights are is knowing where they apply.

A digital tool that can be used to easily find government services in French would improve the accessibility of French language services in Ontario. To this end, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs should make a centralized list of all frontline Government of Ontario services available in French. Although this initiative will require significant coordination and the involvement of the entire public service, it paves the way for clear and effective communication of the offer of services in French in the province, as envisaged by the *French Language Services Act*.

The Commissioner therefore recommends:



RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Ministry of Francophone Affairs compile a complete digital directory of services in French that are covered by the *French Language Services Act* and offered directly to the population. The directory should include the geographic location of these services, and should be easily accessible by the public.



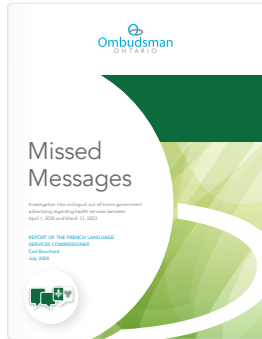
RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Ministry of Francophone Affairs report to the Commissioner in six months on the progress made in the implementation of Recommendation 1, and every six months thereafter until the Commissioner is satisfied with the progress.

Investigations

Unilingual government out-of-home advertising

Report: *Missed Messages*, July 2024



Investigation update: The Commissioner decided to launch this investigation on his own initiative in July 2023 in response to the apparent lack of French in provincial government out-of-home advertising. The investigation involved the Ministry of Health, Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and reviewed 17 advertising campaigns led by or on behalf of the Ministry of Health between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2023. Only three of the campaigns included



July 12, 2024: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard releases his investigation report, *Missed Messages*, at a press conference at Queen's Park, Toronto.



July 12, 2024: The Commissioner and staff from the French Language Services Unit after the report release at Queen's Park, Toronto.

out-of-home advertising in French and they did not communicate equivalent information to the English ads, nor was it communicated at the same time. We found that none of the campaigns reflected the spirit of the Act, or met the government's own rules for communications in French.

The Commissioner issued seven recommendations addressed to Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs. Five recommendations were accepted and two are under review.

Cabinet Office informed us that Recommendation 1 – that a bilingual format be used for all out-of-home government advertising – was “under review” and that it will “assess how it can continue improving media and message visibility in French while maintaining best advertising practices to ensure value for money.”

The Ministry of Francophone Affairs also stated that Recommendation 2 – that specific standards for out-of-home advertising be incorporated into the *Communications in French Directive* and the *Communications in French Guidelines* – was “under review.”

Since this report was published, we have had multiple conversations with the ministries about these recommendations. We will continue to work proactively with the government on these recommendations and provide status updates when appropriate.

“ The *French Language Services Act* does not apply to just 5% of the province’s population, or only 5% of Ontario’s geographic area...The language rights of Francophones in Ontario are protected by quasi-constitutional legislation and must not be dependent on value-for-money considerations.] ”

- Commissioner Carl Bouchard, *Missed Messages*, July 2024

Cuts to French language programs at Laurentian University

Report: *Strengthening the Designation: A Collaborative Effort*, March 2022



Investigation update: This report concluded that Laurentian University failed to meet its obligations as a designated agency under the *French Language Services Act* when it eliminated all programs leading to two designated master’s degrees and several other French language programs. It also concluded that the Ministry of Francophone Affairs had failed in its role as the ministry responsible for administering the *FLSA*, and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities had failed to fulfill its role as sponsoring ministry in the administration of the *FLSA*. Nineteen recommendations were issued

to the three agencies in the report. One of these recommendations was for the university and both ministries to report on their progress in implementing these recommendations at six-month intervals.

The progress reports we received during the 2023-2024 year provided updates on Laurentian University, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' implementation of the recommendations.

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

In the spirit of our Recommendation 4, the Ministry indicated that it has put in place a strengthened governance structure to ensure responsiveness regarding services in French. It shared with us its new internal policy, which further defines the role of the French Language Services Coordinator as the primary contact for all matters related to designated organizations, including consultation regarding any potential changes to programs at the university, in response to our Recommendations 14 and 15.

Laurentian University

For its part, Laurentian University informed us that it has initiated a review of its policy on bilingualism. This policy includes all of the internal processes for the university's bilingualism operations, including communications. In response to their review findings and our Recommendation 3, the university proposed new measures to ensure consultation with the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities before making any changes that could negatively impact its designation.

Laurentian University also told us that it is the duty of the office of the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Francophone Affairs, to ensure that the university complies with its designation under the *FLSA*. This duty will be added to the university's bilingualism policy. The university also mentioned that, in response to our Recommendation 16, it is developing tools to ensure its programs and services are in full compliance.

Ministry of Francophone Affairs

According to the Ministry of Francophone Affairs, its approach to assessing designated agencies has been incorporated into a new designation policy that clarifies the designation process and the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry, sponsoring ministries and designated agencies. The purpose of this new policy is to guarantee regular compliance assessments of all designated agencies. Under this new policy, the French Language Services Coordinator at the Ministry of Colleges and Universities will periodically reach out to Laurentian University to continuously monitor designation requirements.

Lastly, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs shared that it has added new automated communication tools to a new designation platform. The Ministry believes these new tools will build its capacity to stay in frequent communication and send periodic reminders about the obligations of designated agencies. On April 1, 2024, the Ministry asked designated agencies to log into the new designation tool. The Ministry mentioned that by digitizing the designation process, it has been able to centralize and streamline the process, while also tracking the designation timeline.

We will continue monitoring the implementation of all recommendations pertaining to this investigation.

Update on past Annual Reports

Under the *French Language Services Act*, the Commissioner must present recommendations in his Annual Report for improving the delivery of French language services in Ontario. Our practice is to follow up on all of our Office's recommendations and publicly report on the progress of their implementation.



In his first report, published in December 2023, Commissioner Bouchard reviewed the 386 cases submitted to the French Language Services Unit of the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023. This represented a 40% spike in complaints and inquiries over the year before, and was the highest yearly total since the Office of the Ombudsman was given jurisdiction to monitor compliance with the *French Language Services Act*.

A key theme of this report was the “tangible results” that the French Language Services Unit and the entire Ombudsman team produced for Francophones. Some of these results included individual examples of improved services that will help Franco-Ontarians in the future, statements from complainants and officials who were positively impacted by our work, and proactive measures we took to resolve ongoing issues.

These proactive efforts led the Commissioner to make four recommendations for Ontario ministries and agencies to train frontline staff on how and why services in French should be provided, and to ensure all their social media accounts are in both French and English.

As of September 30, 2024, the government had accepted almost all of the recommendations issued in our past Annual Reports and shown proof of major progress in their implementation.

The Ministry of Francophone Affairs told us that with the help of Cabinet Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat, it had begun an in-depth update of two key documents used by the government, namely the *Communications in French Directive* and the *Communications in French Guidelines*. The most recent versions of these documents date back to 2010. The Ministry aims to finish this major update by spring 2025. It has committed to making the new versions of them publicly accessible.

According to the Ministry, the new versions of these documents will define the government's expectations on topics raised in our earlier Annual Reports, including:

- Recommendation 1 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report: Providing guidelines to ensure all social media accounts comply with Ontario Regulation 544/22;
- Recommendation 1 of the 2019-2020 Annual Report: Offering services in French at press briefings; and
- Recommendation 2 of the 2019-2020 Annual Report: Communicating all public health information in French.

The Ministry of Francophone Affairs also informed us that all public-facing public service job postings have been available in French since January 15, 2024, as recommended in our 2021-2022 Annual Report.

Also, in connection to Recommendation 2 of the 2021-2022 Annual Report, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs informed us that 59 updates have been made since December 2022 to Ontario Regulation 398/93, which lists the designated public service agencies, as defined in the *FLSA*, that are required to provide services in French.

Lastly, the Treasury Board Secretariat confirmed it is working with the Ministry of Francophone Affairs to implement a strategy to inform the relevant government agencies and ministries of Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 in our 2022-2023 Annual Report, to ensure frontline staff provide services in French. The Treasury Board Secretariat is also working on sharing information about suitable training programs, the annual compliance certification process and various other resources.

Université de Sudbury

Our team has continued to work on the 115 complaints we received in summer 2023 after the Ministry of Colleges and Universities decided not to fund the Université de Sudbury, a designated university under the *FLSA*. Although our Office does not weigh in on political decisions, we are reviewing whether the Université de Sudbury, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities are in compliance with their obligations under the *FLSA*.

Since January 2020, the Université de Sudbury has been designated in Ontario Regulation 398/93 for the provision of French language and bilingual undergraduate programs on its Sudbury campus and certain services (e.g., university residences). At the time of its designation, the Université de Sudbury was in a university federation with Laurentian University. In 2021, Laurentian University ended the federation agreement when it entered a court-supervised restructuring process. Since then, the Université de Sudbury has not offered any courses, while keeping its designation as a public service agency under the *FLSA* by partially complying in offering housing and other student services.

Following our inquiries, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Université de Sudbury said they were actively working on solutions that would enable the university to meet its obligations under the *FLSA*.

In early 2024, the French Language Services Commissioner communicated with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and the University of Sudbury.

The Commissioner reminded them of the obligations and related regulations under the *FLSA*, as well as the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' obligations regarding the administration of the university's designation. He also asked for regular progress reports on compliance with the university's designation obligations.

The purpose of an *FLSA* designation is to ensure that the services in question are permanently offered and readily accessible in French. There are procedural requirements that must first be met before discontinuing a designated service.

The criteria for meeting these requirements were subject of an Ontario Court of Appeal decision in the case of Hôpital Montfort.

The Commissioner also communicated that many of the recommendations from our investigation report on Laurentian University's cuts to French-language programs would also apply to the administration of the Université de Sudbury's designation. These recommendations aim to improve the administration of the designation by:

- Taking a proactive approach and improving communication and collaboration between sponsoring ministries and designated post-secondary institutions, and
- Assessing compliance prior to any decisions that could impact a designated agency's capacity to meet its obligations.

On September 25, 2024, the Université de Sudbury announced that enrolment for its 2025-2026 programs had opened. We will continue to actively work on this matter until full compliance with *FLSA* obligations has been reached.

Fire Code translation

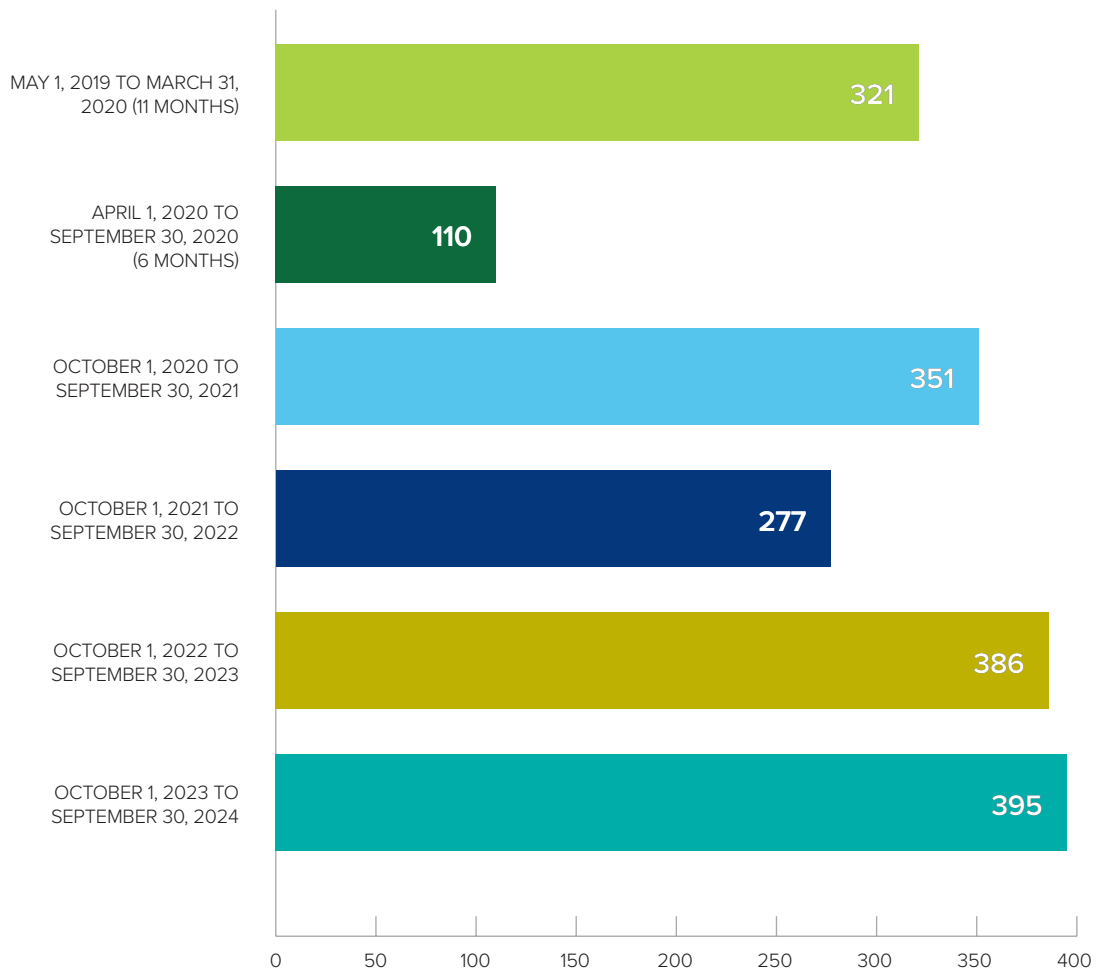
In our 2020-2021 Annual Report, we shared the case of a Francophone working at a French language school board who wanted to obtain the French version of the Fire Code (Ontario Regulation 213/07 of the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act*) in order to know the provisions that apply to school facilities. The regulation was only available in English. He told us that since many provincial government regulations are already bilingual, this one should also be available in French. It should be noted that there is no obligation under the *French Language Services Act* to translate regulations. However, the Act indicates that this is a decision for the Attorney General.

At the time, we had raised the issue with the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario, which reports to the Ministry of the Solicitor General. As a result of our intervention, the Fire Marshal committed to translating the regulation by 2023, when a new version was to be drafted once the ongoing harmonization of the various provincial, territorial and federal codes was completed.

We were recently told that the Fire Code is still in the process of being translated and will be finalized by the end of March 2025. We will provide an update then to confirm the case is closed.

CASES RECEIVED BY THE FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES UNIT

TOTAL:
1,840





LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS, 2019-2024

2023-2024

1. That the Ministry of Francophone Affairs compile a complete digital directory of services in French that are covered by the *French Language Services Act* and offered directly to the population. The directory should include the geographic location of these services, and should be easily accessible by the public.
2. That the Ministry of Francophone Affairs report to the Commissioner in six months on the progress made in the implementation of Recommendation 1, and every six months thereafter until the Commissioner is satisfied with the progress.

2022-2023

1. That, within the next 12 months, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs develop and communicate guidelines for all government agencies, third parties and institutions of the Legislature to ensure all social media accounts comply with Regulation 544/22, and provide a copy of these guidelines to the Commissioner.
2. That Treasury Board direct every government ministry and agency within its mandate to provide regular training and reminders to all frontline staff where an obligation exists to provide services in French.
3. That, as part of the directions, Treasury Board require these government ministries and agencies to attest annually that they are compliant.
4. That, within the next 12 months, Treasury Board provide the Commissioner with a copy of the directions, and confirmation of their implementation.

2021-2022

1. That the Treasury Board Secretariat review the Ontario Public Service employment policy to ensure that job postings in French are not limited to designated bilingual positions.
2. That, by September 30, 2023, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs develop a plan, addressed to the Commissioner, to update Regulation 398/93.



LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS, 2019-2024

2020-2021

1. That Ontario government services in French be evaluated using the French Language Services Commissioner's linguistic Compass (FLSC Compass).

2019-2020

1. That the government systematically plan to offer services in French at press briefings.
2. That the government ensure that the communication of all public health information be provided in French and English simultaneously.
3. That the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ontario Provincial Police continue their efforts to guarantee an equivalent offer of services in French, and without delay, when issuing emergency alerts.
4. That the government plan for the provision of equivalent French language services, without delay, where required by the *French Language Services Act* and its Regulation 284/11 regarding third parties.
5. That the government regularly assess its capacity to offer services in French, particularly for frontline services.
6. That the government ensure that regular updates are provided to staff, particularly frontline staff, on French language services policies and practices.
7. That each Deputy Minister table a plan to the Executive Council that reports annually on the implementation of the *French Language Services Act* and the quality of French language services for the ministry for which they are responsible.
8. That, as part of her obligation under the *French Language Services Act* to submit an annual report on the activities of the Ministry of Francophone Affairs to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and to the Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Francophone Affairs report annually, beginning April 1, 2022, on the plans tabled by Deputy Ministers and their implementation.

APPENDIX

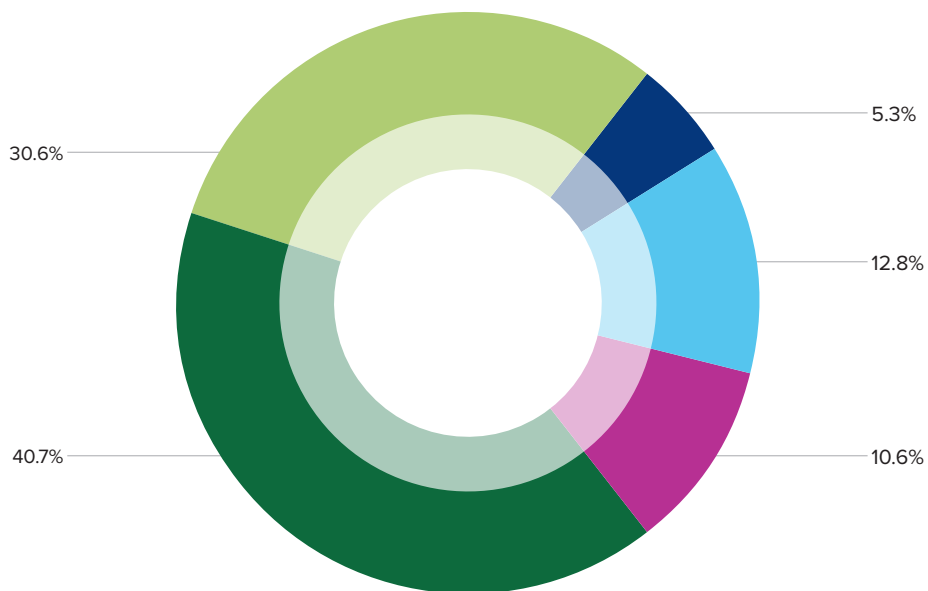
CASES RECEIVED ABOUT ORGANIZATIONS SUBJECT TO THE *FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES ACT*, OCTOBER 1, 2023 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

DESIGNATED AGENCIES - CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	41.3%
MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL	6.2%
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROCUREMENT	5.9%
MINISTRY OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL	4.7%
METROLINX	3.8%
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION	3.8%
ONTARIO HEALTH	3.5%
MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES	2.7%
TRIBUNALS ONTARIO	2.7%
MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	2.4%
MINISTRY OF HEALTH	2.1%
DESIGNATED AGENCIES - HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE	2.1%
LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO	1.8%
MINISTRY OF LABOUR, IMMIGRATION, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	1.8%
WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD	1.2%
CABINET OFFICE	1.2%
MINISTRY OF FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS	1.2%

**Ministries, boards, commissions, corporations and agencies designated under the French Language Services Act.*

***Organizations that were the subject of less than 1% of cases are not listed (total – 11.6%).*

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN OF CASES RECEIVED ABOUT ORGANIZATIONS SUBJECT TO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES ACT, OCTOBER 1, 2023–SEPTEMBER 30, 2024*



- **NORTHWEST:** BOUNDED BY PENETANGUISHENE, SUDBURY, KENORA, COCHRANE AND NIPISSING
- **NORTHEAST:** BOUNDED BY HALIBURTON, RENFREW, PEMBROKE AND HAWKESBURY
- **EAST:** BOUNDED BY KINGSTON, OTTAWA AND CORNWALL
- **CENTRE:** BOUNDED BY BARRIE, CAMBRIDGE AND OSHAWA, INCLUDING THE CITY OF TORONTO
- **SOUTHWEST:** BOUNDED BY HAMILTON, NIAGARA FALLS, WINDSOR, SARNIA AND KITCHENER

**All cases where a postal code is available*

MEETING WITH AND LISTENING TO THE FRANCO-ONTARIAN COMMUNITY



The following is a snapshot of key outreach activities – virtual and in person – between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024.

Toronto, October 27-29, 2023 – Speech to the annual conference of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO).

Ottawa, December 7, 2023 – Interview with Unique-FM.

Sudbury, December 7, 2023 – Interview with the morning radio program “Le matin du Nord,” Radio-Canada.

Hawkesbury, December 8, 2023 – Interview with the Édition André Paquette newspapers, *Tribune-Express/Reflet-News/Vision*.

Ottawa, December 11, 2023 – Interview with the morning radio program “Les matins d’ici,” Radio-Canada.

Toronto, December 13, 2023 – Interview with Radio-Canada.

Sudbury, December 13, 2023 – Interview with *Le Voyageur*.

Toronto, February 14, 2024 – Speech to the annual general assembly of the Club canadien de Toronto.

Toronto, February 27, 2024 (virtual) – Video message for the Black History Month gala of the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto.

Ottawa, March 14-15, 2024 – Visit to the Ottawa region to meet with Francophone organizations: Centre des services communautaires Vanier, Collège La Cité, University of Ottawa, Muséoparc Vanier, Hôpital Montfort, Centre de santé communautaire du centre-ville, Mouvement d’implication francophone d’Orléans (MIFO), and Maison de la francophonie d’Ottawa.

Ottawa, March 14, 2024 – Interview with Unique-FM.

Ottawa, March 14, 2024 – Interview with the radio program “Sur le vif,” Radio-Canada.

MEETING WITH AND LISTENING TO THE FRANCO-ONTARIAN COMMUNITY

Toronto, March 20, 2024 – Raising of the International Francophonie flag at Toronto City Hall, organized by ACFO-Toronto, the Consulate of France in Toronto, and la Fédération Tricolore de Toronto.

Toronto, March 20, 2024 (virtual) – Speech to the Ontario Bar Association for International Francophonie Day.

Toronto, March 28, 2024 – Speech to forum on access to mental health services in French in the Greater Toronto Area, organized by Entité 3 and Entité 4, and the Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO).

Toronto, April 3, 2024 – Interview with the morning radio program “Y a pas deux matins pareils,” Radio-Canada.

Toronto, April 17-18, 2024 – Speech about health services to the Journées de réflexion Santé sessions organized by the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO).

Toronto, April 24, 2024 – Panel with Hon. Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, organized by the Club canadien de Toronto.

Toronto, April 25, 2024 – Participation at awareness session for French as a second language at Queen's Park, organized by Canadian Parents for French.

Richmond Hill, May 3, 2024 – Presentation on the Commissioner's role to Grade 7 and 8 students at École Norval-Morisseau.

Toronto, May 14, 2024 – Spring reception for the Legislative Assembly intern program Queen's Park.

Toronto, May 30, 2024 – Interview with *ONFR+*.

Sudbury, May 31, 2024 – Interview with *Le Voyageur*.

Canmore, Alberta, May 31, 2024 (virtual) – Video message to delegates at the annual conference of the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO).

MEETING WITH AND LISTENING TO THE FRANCO-ONTARIAN COMMUNITY

New Liskeard, June 5, 2024 (virtual) – Speech at the Annual General Meeting of the Assemblée générale annuelle du Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l’Ontario, followed by an article in *Le Voyageur* on June 12.

Toronto, July 12, 2024 – Interview with CHOQ-FM.

Toronto, July 12, 2024 – Interview with *Le Droit*.

Toronto, July 15, 2024 – Interview with morning radio program “Le matin du Nord,” Radio-Canada.

Sarnia, Chatham, Windsor and London, August 26-28, 2024 – Visit to Southwestern Ontario to meet with Francophone organizations: Centre communautaire de Sarnia, Centre communautaire La Girouette, Réseau-femmes du sud-ouest de l’Ontario, Centre communautaire francophone Windsor Essex Kent, and Carrefour communautaire francophone de London.

Windsor, August 28, 2024 – Interview with the morning radio program, “Matins sans frontières,” Radio-Canada.

Windsor, August 28, 2024 – Interview with *Le Rempart/L’Action*.

Penetanguishene, September 21, 2024 – Speech to the 50th anniversary celebration at the Centre d’activités françaises (CAF), organized by the Clé de la Baie.

Timmins, Hearst, Moonbeam and Kapuskasing, September 24-26, 2024 – Visit to Northeastern Ontario to meet with Francophone organizations: Université de Hearst, Notre-Dame Hospital, Centre de santé communautaire de Kapuskasing et région, Centre de Loisirs, Services d’établissement du nord-est de l’Ontario, Réseau du Nord, Centre culturel La Ronde, Conseil scolaire catholique des Grandes Rivières, and Parents partenaires en éducation.

Hearst, September 25, 2024 – Interview with Radio-Canada.

Hearst, September 25, 2024 – Interview with *Le Journal du Nord*.

Moonbeam, September 25, 2024 – Interview with Kapuskasing local radio station CKGN.

OMBUDSMAN ONTARIO'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, 2024-2027

As the core of our strategic plan for the next three years, our strategic priorities outline how our work supports our vision and mission. They provide a framework for our goals, objectives and action plans.

PILLAR 1

Prioritize service excellence and value for all Ontarians.

Strive for unparalleled service excellence and value through innovative solutions and a steadfast commitment to meeting the diverse needs of Ontarians.

1. Elevate our public profile to increase awareness of and engagement with Ombudsman Ontario.
2. Employ technology to optimize accessibility and service delivery to Ontarians.
3. Leverage our data to ensure we remain responsive to the evolving needs of Ontarians.
4. Embed principles of Truth and Reconciliation across our operations.

PILLAR 2

Strengthen and improve public services through exemplary Ombudsmanship.

Strengthen and improve public services for the benefit of Ontarians by promoting accountability, transparency, fairness and a respect for rights.

1. Maximize the impact of our case resolutions and investigations to improve public sector services.
2. Practice proactive ombudsmanship through education and appropriate information sharing with government and public sector bodies.
3. Establish ourselves as global leaders in our field, recognized for excellence in enhancing governance through impactful, high-quality work.

PILLAR 3

Foster a workplace that empowers and unifies our team.

Foster an environment where our team is empowered, valued and united in a shared sense of purpose.

1. Continue to build a team of diverse and experienced professionals who are committed to our mission, vision and values.
2. Cultivate a unified, equitable and inclusive workplace culture that enables and supports our team.
3. Promote excellence and continuous development of our team.



OUR MISSION

To be an effective agent of positive change for the people of Ontario by enhancing government and public sector fairness, accountability and transparency, as well as promoting a respect for rights.



OUR VISION

A public sector that serves Ontarians in a way that is fair, accountable, transparent and respectful of their rights.



OUR PRINCIPLES

IMPARTIALITY: We do not take sides when resolving complaints or investigating concerns. Our decisions and recommendations to improve public services are based on the facts and the evidence.

INDEPENDENCE: We are independent. We do not take directions from government, public sector agencies, interest groups or individual complainants.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Our reviews, resolutions, and investigations are done in private. Protecting the confidentiality of those who contact us is central to how we work.

FAIRNESS: We work to ensure that government and the broader public sector act in a fair, open, and transparent manner when delivering public services and programs.



OUR VALUES

TRUST: We seek to build appropriate and productive relationships based on trust and credibility.

RESPECT: We treat everyone with dignity and respect and strive to listen and respond with compassion.

ACCESSIBILITY: Our services are free and accessible.

EXCELLENCE: We strive to achieve the highest professional standards through the delivery of efficient and timely services and impactful, high-quality work.